

## **Karen DuBois-Walton -- Testimony Supporting HB 5204:**

AN ACT CONCERNING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND FAIR SHARE PLANS FOR MUNICIPALITIES TO INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**March 10, 2022**

Honorable Co-Chairs, Representative Quentin Williams and Senator Rick Lopes, Vice Chairs Frank Smith and Saud Anwar, and Ranking Members Joe Polletta and Paul Cicarella; and the entirety of the Housing Committee:

My name is Karen DuBois-Walton and I respectfully submit this testimony **in support of HB 5204: AN ACT CONCERNING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND FAIR SHARE PLANS FOR MUNICIPALITIES TO INCREASE AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

I serve as the President of Elm City Communities/Housing Authority of the City of New Haven and our affiliates The Glendower Group, Inc., a development company and 360 Management Group, Co., a property management company. At ECC/HANH we manage more than three-thousand units of affordable and mixed-income housing and provide housing subsidies to another 3,000 families across our city. But even with the significant federal resources we receive, we are only able to help house 1 out of every 4 families who are eligible for housing support. We have a waiting list of more than 17,000 families, some waiting for many years to receive any housing subsidy.

Crucially, of our 17,000-person waiting list, one-third come from outside of New Haven. While New Haven is in desperate need of more affordable housing, our region and state are as well. Too many people in Connecticut are reliant on concentrated communities of cheaper housing disproportionately located in cities or wait for a decade to finally receive a housing subsidy that limits where they could potentially live to one municipality.

Estimates of our state's affordable housing shortage range from 86,000 units to 140,000 (or even more). We have a profound need for more affordable housing, one that too few of our legislators have faced head-on. We need real solutions to our housing crisis, solutions that fit the scale of the problem.

HB 5204 is one of a few bills this session that take our housing crisis seriously and act in turn. HB 5204 would generate tens of thousands of new units of affordable housing in high-opportunity communities all across our state, taking a big chunk out of our state's affordable housing shortage and immediately expanding opportunity for tens of thousands of our neighbors. Not only do we have a moral obligation to expand the supply of affordable housing statewide, but by expanding opportunity and reducing housing costs for tens of thousands of our community members, we also give our state's economy a boost.

That's why Elm City Communities joined Growing Together CT, a coalition of organizations and advocates across Connecticut who are committed to solving our housing crisis and building a better future for our state. The Growing Together coalition is fighting for two priorities: increasing affordable housing outside our cities and increasing state investment in our cities. HB 5204 will do the former, but it must be paired with significant investment in our cities that will allow all of us to truly grow together.

Growing Together CT is currently in the process of holding listening sessions in the cities across our state to hear from the residents of those cities what they most need from our state. We intend to bring a bill next year that will call for those investments and will work in tandem with HB 5204 to generate new growth and opportunity in our cities, suburbs, towns, and villages. Connecticut has the opportunity to build a bright future for all our residents—but to seize that opportunity, we need to commit to solutions that match the scale of our problems.

I urge this committee to support HB 5204, which will desegregate our state, create opportunity for tens of thousands of our neighbors, generate over \$60 billion in income for our residents and over \$12 billion in state and local tax revenue, and create 80,000 jobs. Importantly, however, this committee should support HB 5204 in concert with next year's planned urban investment bill. We can grow together, and I hope this committee and our legislature will take the lead in making that happen.

Thank you,

Karen DuBois-Walton